CELEBRATING 30 YEARS 1996-2026

WHEELCHAIR HANDBALL

2026-2027 RULEBOOK

American Association of adaptED SPORTS PROGRAMS

OFFICIAL AAASP INTERSCHOLASTIC WHEELCHAIR HANDBALL

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WHEELCHAIR HANDBALL

OFFICIAL RULES

FOR AAASP GAME OFFICIALS AND COACHES

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Required Certifications

Officials

- All officials must attend an in-person training before each sport season.
- All officials must register through DragonFly Max and submit a current background check every two (2) years. If there is no current background check available, use the following link to complete one: https://opportunities.averity.com/AAAEDSInc.

Coaches

- All new coaches must attend the in-person coaches training.
- All coaches returning coaches must participate in the coaches training, via Zoom.
- All coaches must complete the NFHS Learn courses: *Concussion in Sports, Sudden Cardiac Arrest* and *Protecting Students from Abuse*. All certificates of completion must be uploaded to DragonFly.

NOTE: AAASP strongly recommends CPR, AED, and First Aid training for all officials and coaches.

Injury and Emergency Procedures

Serious Injuries

- Officials and coaches must report serious injuries to AAASP staff immediately following the game.
- A Game Report form must be completed and submitted to the AAASP Director of Sports and/or the Coordinator of Sports within 24 hours.

Head Injuries

- Any potential head injury requires the immediate implementation of the established concussion protocol.

Emergencies

- In any emergency, call 911 immediately.
- All personnel must follow the school system's Emergency Action Plan.

1. THE GAME - OVERVIEW

Wheelchair Handball is an adaptED sports program played indoors by two teams of six players. The objective is to score by throwing, tapping, or kicking the ball into the opponent's goal while preventing the opponent from scoring.

The sport is co-ed and cross-disability, open to students from first grade through high school graduation. It is a fall-season sport in the AAASP calendar.

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2. COURT & EQUIPMENT (SEE APPENDIX A – FIELD OF PLAY)

Playing Court

Dimensions	Minimum: 50 ft wide × 94 ft long (high school basketball court). Maximum: 50 ft wide × 100 ft long (college basketball court).
Surface	Indoor gymnasium floor.
Lines	Distinct lines no more than 2 inches wide; a halfway line and a 12-foot diameter center circle.
Corner marks	At each sideline, 5 feet from the end line — parallel to end line, extending 1 foot from the sideline. Used for throw-ins.
Penalty shot line	At the basketball free-throw line, 18 feet in front of the goal.
Game clock	Visible from both benches.
Crease Line	10 ft. from the baseline across the width of the basketball lane.

Goal Area (Crease)

At each end, two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 3 ft., 6 in. from the inside of each goal post, extending 10 ft. into the field and joined by a line parallel to the goal line. The crease is 12 ft wide × 10 ft deep.

Goals

- Two upright posts 5 ft apart (inside measurement), centered on the goal line
- Crossbar lower edge: 5 to 6 ft. in from the floor surface
- Post/crossbar width and depth: no more than 5 inches; consistent width throughout
- Goal depth: minimum 3 feet
- Nets attached to posts, crossbar, and floor or bottom rear of the goals

Team Benches & Table

- Benches separated by a suitable partition; both bench areas must be identical in area and access
- Benches located equidistant from the division line extended, on either side of the scorekeeper/timekeeper's table
- Scorekeeper's/timekeeper's table located courtside at midcourt

Wheelchair Requirements

- All players must play in a wheelchair (power, standard, or sport chairs are acceptable)
- Motorized scooters, carts, and similar equipment are not allowed
- Wheelchairs may have four, five, or six wheels
- All modifications subject to referee review for safety, fairness, and rule compliance
- Footrest forward-most point: no more than 5 inches from the floor
- Footrests must have rounded or smooth corners — no projections, knobs, or door bumpers that could hook or entangle another chair
- Frames without a footrest: any hazardous protruding areas must be padded
- Horizontal bar or push handles at the rear must be adequately padded
- Lap strap: over upper thighs or hips to prevent the player from falling out.
- Achilles strap: behind the player's legs, within 6 inches of foot platforms, to prevent feet from falling off or being used as a brake.
- Foot strap: secured over the top of the athlete's feet to the footplate, preventing standing or extending legs during play.
- Bungee cords are not permitted

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> *Note: For players requiring higher platforms, material may be added to the underside or topside of the foot platform to meet the 5-inch requirement. The primary frame of any adaptation must be metal and firmly attached to the chair frame.*

Protective Equipment

- Headgear: A Virginia Tech 5-Star certified protective headgear is required for all student athletes
- Safety glasses or protective goggles recommended for players who wear eyeglasses
- Anti-tip devices and safety strapping recommended for players prone to tipping backward
- Goalkeeper: gloves or other protective equipment is allowed
- Anti-tip devices that touch the floor during play are exempt from equipment violation rules

The Ball

- Tachikara SV5WSC Indoor Competition Volleyball NFHS approved
- Home team provides a legal ball; the referee may approve the visiting team's ball if the home ball does not meet specifications

Uniforms & Numbers

- Home team wears white jerseys; visiting team wears dark jerseys
- AAASP stacked logo: worn on the left sleeve, 3 inches wide × 1.5 inches high
- No visible sponsor logo on jersey, shorts/pants, or undershirt
- Jersey number: at least 6 inches high on back, 4 inches high on front, at least 0.75 inches wide
- Legal numbers: 0, 00, 1–5, 10–15, 20–25, 30–35, 40–45, 50–55
- No more than three colors per number; same color and style front and back
- Team name on front; player's last name (if used) on back above the number
- Undershirts must be similar in color to the jersey torso — no frayed edges
- No jewelry during play. Medical notification jewelry is permitted if taped and reviewed by the referee

3. PLAYERS & SUBSTITUTION

Team Size

- 6 players per team on the court during play, including one goalkeeper
- Minimum 5 players required; a team unable to field 5 at start time forfeits the game (recorded 1–0)
- A team that cannot substitute a disqualified player must play one player short

The Goalkeeper

- Once the goalkeeper has possession of the ball, they have three options:
  - Hold the ball for up to 5 seconds → team retains possession with a throw-in at the nearest corner mark
  - Pass the ball to a teammate
  - Leave the crease with the ball
- If the ball is in the goal area, the goalkeeper must attempt to gain possession within 5 seconds. Any contact with the ball counts as possession. Failure to attempt possession = court violation and loss of possession.
- If the goalkeeper leaves the crease (with or without the ball), the 3-second possession rule applies. The goalkeeper may not return to the crease while holding the ball.
- The goalkeeper may move anywhere on the court. Once outside the crease, no other player on the team may enter the crease to fill the goalkeeper's position — only the designated goalkeeper may enter the crease.

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Substitution Rules

- Every player must play at least one complete, continuous 8-minute period per half
- The coach chooses which period in each half to play each player
- Players in their first period of the half cannot be substituted out (except for injury)
- Players who have completed a full period may be substituted in their second or third period
- By the third period of each half, any player who has not yet played must enter the game
- A substitute may not enter until they check in at the scorekeeper's table and the referee summons them

> *Note: If a player is present but cannot play due to medical or disciplinary reasons, the coach must notify the official, scorekeeper, and opposing coach before the game.*

4. GAME STRUCTURE

Periods & Clock

Periods	Six 8-minute periods — three in each half
Between periods	2-minute break
Halftime	10 or 15 minutes (both coaches, Area Coordinator, and head official must agree to shorten to 10 minutes)
Clock stops (periods 1, 2, 4, 5)	Time-outs, injuries, penalty shots, and at the referee's discretion
Clock stops (periods 3 & 6)	After each goal scored (unless Mercy Rule is in effect), plus all reasons above
Mercy Rule — 6th period	If a team leads by 8+ points, clock does NOT stop after goals (both coaches must agree before the game)

Starting & Restarting Play

- Coin toss: visiting team calls; winner chooses first possession; other team chooses which goal to defend
- Legal kick-off: one offensive player in center circle (may face any direction); remaining offensive players outside circle on their half; defense at least 10 feet behind the centerline on their half
- Once the ball is administered, no player may move until it is passed by the center-circle player
- At least one other player must touch the ball before a goal can be scored or the clock starts
- The center-circle player may not touch the ball a second time until another player has touched it
- After a goal: team scored upon restarts with a kick-off at center court
- After halftime: teams switch ends; team without first-half possession has first possession in the second half
- Periods 2, 3, 5, 6: possession arrow determines which team in-bounds at the half-court line

Time-Outs

- 4 time-outs per team per game; 1 minute each
- The 1-minute clock does not start until both teams have reached their benches
- During a live ball: only the team with possession may call a time-out
- During a dead ball: either team may call a time-out; possession does not change
- During any time-out: all players except the goalkeeper must leave the field for the full minute; the defensive team establishes position first on return
- Equipment time-out: 45 seconds; referee grants immediately if the affected team has possession or is in danger; otherwise granted at the next dead ball

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Overtime

- If tied at the end of regulation: one 8-minute sudden death overtime period
- Possession determined by coin flip (visiting team calls)
- Teams defend the same goal as the second half; 5-minute intermission before overtime begins
- Each team gets 1 time-out for overtime (cannot carry over from regulation)
- First team to score wins

Shootout (if overtime is still tied)

- Each team selects 5 players to attempt penalty shots
- The team that did NOT have the overtime kick-off chooses to shoot first or second
- Players alternate — Team A shoots, then Team B shoots, repeating for 5 rounds
- After 5 rounds, the team with the most goals wins
- If still tied after 5 rounds: the same 5 players alternate single shots — first to score wins; the team that did not shoot first in the shootout now chooses order
- Goalkeeper must have played in goal for at least one full period during regulation and the full overtime period (injury exception applies)

Scoring a Goal

- A goal is scored when the entire ball passes through the plane of the goal line (between the posts, under the crossbar)
- The goal-line plane is stationary even if the goal post moves
- A shot that leaves the shooter's hand before the buzzer and enters the goal after the buzzer counts — unless it deflects off any player or wheelchair other than the goalkeeper
- If a player enters the crease after the ball has fully crossed the goal line, the goal stands; if the player entered before the ball crossed, the goal is disallowed
- A goal may not be awarded if any object from outside the field of play touched the ball
- Forfeits are recorded as 1–0

5. BALL & POSSESSION RULES

Ball Movement

- Players may use hands, feet, the chair, or any other part of the body to move the ball
- Players may dribble with one or two hands

Possession & 3-Second Rule

- Once a player has possession, they have 3 seconds to pass, dribble, or shoot
- Failure to do so: ball awarded to the opposing team at the nearest sideline to the infraction
- A player's feet or footplate may not touch the floor while in possession (exception: players who use feet to propel their chairs — only feet may touch the surface)
- A player's hand touching the floor while in possession is not a violation

Ball in the Crease

- Players other than the goalkeeper may attempt to gain possession of the ball in the crease as long as they do not touch the crease with any part of their wheelchair or body, and do not interfere with the goalkeeper
- Offensive player enters crease: ball awarded to the defense at the nearest corner mark
- Defensive player enters crease (no effect on play): ball awarded to the offense at the nearest corner mark
- Defensive player in crease affects play / interferes with a shot: penalty shot awarded to the offense

Held Ball

- The ball is tied-up if neither team can move it for 2 seconds
- Possession determined by the alternating possession arrow
- In-bound at the nearest sideline

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Alternating Possession

- Team that does not start with the ball begins the alternating rotation on the first held-ball situation
- Arrow reverses immediately after an alternating possession throw-in ends — or if the in-bounding team commits a throw-in violation
- A foul by either team during an alternating possession throw-in does not cause the throw-in team to lose the arrow

6. OUT OF BOUNDS & THROW-INS

Ball Out of Bounds

- Ball is out when it touches the sideline, end line, any part of the building, or is stopped by the referee
- Ball is out when last touched by the team committing the out-of-bounds infraction
- All players must remain on the court at all times while the ball is live
- A player who leaves the court to get around an opponent's position: violation called immediately

> *Note: If both teams simultaneously touch the ball last, or if referees are in doubt, possession is determined by the alternating possession arrow.*

Putting the Ball In-bounds (Throw-in Rules)

- Throw-in: two-handed overhead throw. If a player's disability requires it, one hand may be used, provided the throw is initiated from behind the head
- Must be released within 5 seconds of the referee's whistle; referees account for the player's disability
- Ball must be thrown in the air — bouncing on or outside the line means turnover to the opposing team at the same spot
- Balls going out over a sideline: in-bounded from that sideline
- Balls going out over the end line: in-bounded from the nearest corner mark (never from the end line)
- A minimum of one player (not the inbounder, not the goalkeeper on a restart) must touch the ball before a goal can be scored or the clock starts
- No player — offensive or defensive — may be closer than 3 feet to the inbounder during the throw-in
- Inbounder may not re-enter the court except at the spot of the throw-in
- Ball must be touched by another player or chair before the inbounder may touch it again
- Inbounder may not dribble as their in-bound attempt
- If the ball crosses to the other side without being touched by another player, it is treated as the inbounder's team touching it last — turnover at the same spot
- Defensive players may not interfere with the inbounder's re-entry to the court

7. VIOLATIONS & PENALTIES

All violations result in the ball being awarded to the opposing team unless specified otherwise.

Violation	Consequence
3-second possession	Ball awarded to the opposing team at the nearest sideline
Feet/footplate touch floor (non-propulsion players)	Ball awarded to opposing team at the nearest sideline
Ball out of bounds	Opposing team in-bounds from the sideline or nearest corner mark
Player goes out of bounds	Immediate violation
Offensive player enters crease	Ball awarded to defense at nearest corner mark; shot disallowed unless ball crossed goal line first

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Violation	Consequence
Defensive player enters crease (no effect)	Offense awarded throw-in at nearest corner mark
Defensive player in crease affects play	Penalty shot for the offense
More than 6 players on court	Violation assessed
Centerline shot violation	In-bound to opposing team at the centerline; any goal scored is disallowed
Physical advantage (standing/lifting)	Violation; player may not lift body off seat or stand to gain an advantage
Illegal save attempt	Ball awarded to the opposing team (intentionally throwing/tapping ball off an opponent out of bounds)
Equipment touching floor (non-anti-tip)	If in possession: opposing team in-bounds at nearest sideline. If not in possession: warning; 45-sec equipment timeout if needed. Second offense: player must substitute until resolved

Centerline Shot Violation — Detail

A centerline shot violation is called when a player shoots (or last touches) the ball across the centerline toward the opponent's goal without the ball touching another player between the centerline and the goal.

8. FOULS & PENALTIES

Common Fouls

- Ramming — collision where a player fails to gain position or make an attempt to stop/alter their path
- Holding — impeding a player's movement by grasping the chair or body
- Hooking — using any part of the body or chair to hook onto another player's chair
- Physical contact on an opponent by hand, arm, foot, shoulder, or head

> *Note: Blocking is legal when the blocking wheelchair has 'position' — meaning the blocking chair's leading edge precedes the opponent's leading edge. Ramming into another wheelchair without position is not allowed.*

Individual Foul Limit

- A player is disqualified upon committing their 6th foul of the game
- Individual fouls accumulate across both halves and overtime
- If a disqualified player cannot be substituted, the team plays one player short

Team Foul Bonus

- Each team is allowed 5 common fouls before the penalty bonus takes effect
- Team fouls from the first half do NOT carry over into the second half
- Team fouls from the second half DO carry over into overtime
- Beginning with the 6th team foul of a half: all subsequent common fouls result in a dead-ball penalty shot; the ball is dead after the shot regardless of outcome; shooting team receives an in-bound at the centerline

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Foul Consequences Summary

Situation	Result
Offensive common foul (before team foul bonus)	Turnover — ball to opposing team
Offensive common foul (6th+ team foul of half)	Penalty shot for opposing team + in-bound at midcourt
Defensive common foul (before bonus)	Offense in-bounds at the sideline nearest the foul
Defensive common foul (6th+ team foul of half)	Penalty shot for the offense + in-bound at midcourt after shot
Defensive foul in offensive area on a shot attempt	Penalty shot (unless shot was successful — foul still reported)
Unnecessary roughness	Penalty shot + possession at midcourt for opposing team
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Penalty shot + possession at midcourt; counts toward player's 6-foul limit and team total
Fighting	Immediate disqualification + penalty shot + possession at midcourt for opposing team
Flagrant foul / abusive behavior toward referee or player	Immediate disqualification

9. PENALTY SHOTS

A penalty shot may be taken by any offensive player (including the goalkeeper) who is on the court at the time of the foul.

Procedure

- Ball placed at the 18-foot penalty shot line (basketball free-throw line). Thrown shots: referee hands the ball to the player. Kicked shots: referee places the ball on the line.
- Player must shoot without going over or touching the line.
- Player has 5 seconds to shoot after the referee's signal (whistle).
- All players except the defensive goalkeeper must be behind the centerline — offensive players at outside positions, defensive players at inside positions.
- No player may cross the centerline until the ball has traveled the distance of its own circumference.

Outcomes After the Shot

- Goal scored (standard penalty shot): restart per kick-off rules — the team that committed the foul gains possession
- Shot crosses end line: opposing team in-bounds at the nearest corner mark
- Goalkeeper saves the shot: may hold up to 5 seconds, pass, or carry ball into play
- Ball deflects off posts, crossbar, or goalkeeper and returns to the field: ball is live — any player may attempt possession

> *Note: Exception — Bonus situation, unsportsmanlike conduct, unnecessary roughness, or fighting fouls: the ball is dead after the shot regardless of outcome. Ball is not live; no continuation.*

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Violations During a Penalty Shot

- Defensive violation during the shot → another penalty shot if the attempt failed
- Offensive violation during the shot → defense in-bounds at the nearest corner mark
- Offensive player crosses centerline early → goal does not count

10. KEY DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Position	The blocking wheelchair's point of contact leads the leading edge of the opponent's wheelchair. Without position, blocking becomes ramming.
Blocking (legal)	A legal move to impede another player's movement when the blocking chair has established position. Incidental contact may occur; ramming is not allowed.
Ramming (illegal)	A collision from any angle where the player fails to gain position or makes no attempt to stop or alter their path. Players must have control of their wheelchair at all times.
Hooking (illegal)	Impeding another player's progress by using any part of the body or chair to hook onto any part of the opponent's chair.
Held ball	Neither team can move the ball for 2 seconds. Possession determined by the alternating possession arrow; in-bounded at the nearest sideline.
Live ball	Ball is in play from game start to finish — including rebounds off goal posts, crossbar, or referee — until a whistle is blown.
Dead ball	Occurs after any goal, injury, held ball, ball out of bounds, referee's whistle, foul, floor violation, or end of period.
Illegal save attempt	Intentionally throwing or tapping the ball onto an opponent to cause it to go out of bounds — a violation. An unintentional deflection is a legal save attempt and normal rules apply.
Crease (goal area)	The 12 ft × 10 ft area in front of each goal. Only the designated goalkeeper may enter the crease to play. Other players may attempt possession near the crease but must not touch it.
Fallen player	If a player falls and is not in danger, play continues until a dead ball or goal. If in danger, play stops immediately. A player who falls and touches or possesses the ball gives it to the opposing team at the nearest sideline.

11. REFEREES

Authority & Crew

- Two or three referees on the floor; all floor referees share full authority
- Authority begins when referees enter the field of play
- Referee decisions on points of fact connected with play are final
- Referees may withhold a call if doing so would preserve a legitimate immediate scoring opportunity for the offense (advantage rule)

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Pre-Game Duties

- 20 minutes before game time: receive team lineups (names, numbers, six starters) at the scorekeeper's table
- Inspect and approve uniforms, wheelchairs, goals, and scoring/timing devices
- Equipment checks completed no later than 20 minutes before the first game; subsequent checks by agreement of both coaches
- Reach unanimous agreement with both head coaches on whether to apply the Mercy Rule before the game begins
- Note players with functional limitations affecting their throw-in ability (e.g., hemiplegics)
- Note any players present but not playing due to injury or discipline

During the Game

- Administer the ball to start the game and all restarts
- Administer the alternating possession arrow for periods 2, 3, 5, and 6
- Prohibit practice during dead balls (except at halftime)
- Grant, charge, and time all timeouts
- Signal: which team has the throw-in, cause of dead ball, throw-in location
- Remove a player upon their 6th foul; notify the coach and player of disqualification
- Forfeit the game when conditions warrant
- Correct scoring or bookkeeping errors; approve the final score each period
- Inform both teams of overtime procedures when the score is tied at end of regulation

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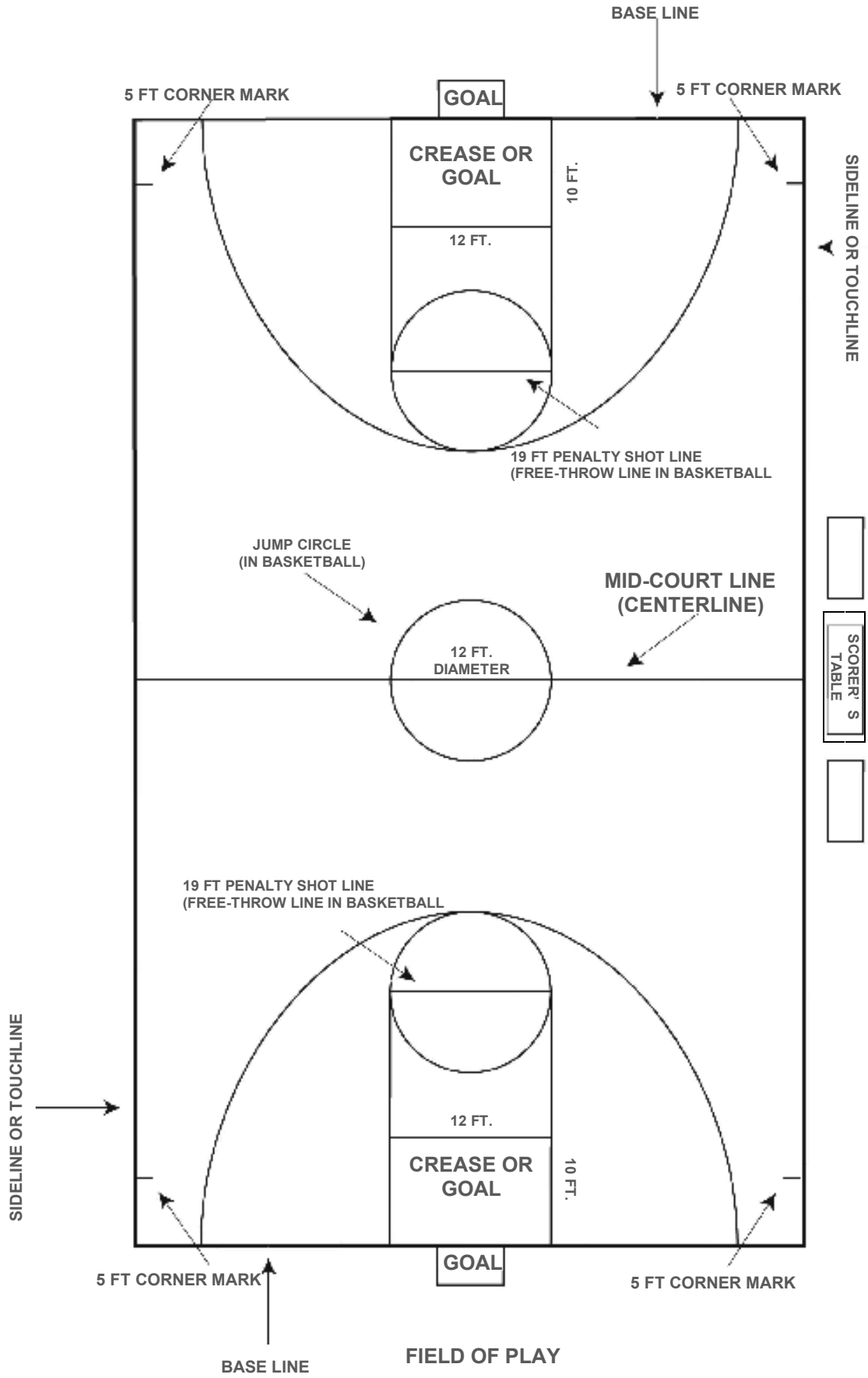
APPENDIX A – FIELD OF PLAY



FIELD OF PLAY

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APPENDIX B – OFFICIALS SIGNALS

GOAL
Both arms extended above the head with palms facing inward

3-SECOND VIOLATION
One arm extended above head holding three fingers up

DISALLOWED GOAL
Both hands swung laterally across the body with palms down

CENTER LINE VIOLATION
Both hands placed on the hip

OFFICIALS TIMEOUT
Both hands tapping the shoulders

HOOKING (DOWN)
One hand clasping the wrist of the other hand with the arm in a downward position

HOLDING (UP)
One hand clasping the wrist of the other hand with the arm in an upward position

ILLEGAL PROCEDURE & UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT
Rotating clenched fists around one another in front of chest

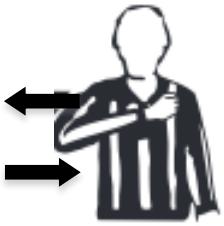
PENALTY / CAUTION / EJECTION
One arm extended above head with fist closed (then verbalize information)

TEAM TIMEOUT
One arm extended above head with fist open (then verbalize information)

PUSHING OR RAMMING
Both hands extending out from the chest pushing back and forth

OBSTRUCTION
Fists tapping chest

INDICATING POSSESSION
Arm and hand extended horizontally in the direction of the goal the possessing team is shooting on, NOT the goal they are defending (where their goalie is positioned)



STRIKING / ELBOWING
One fist with striking motion back and forth (like elbowing someone)

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APPENDIX C – ABLE-BODIED RULE GUIDELINES FOR HANDBALL

Able-Bodied (AB) Player Participation Guidelines Handball

Roster Eligibility

An able-bodied (AB) player may be added to a team roster under the following conditions:

- **Handball and Football**: The team has **6 or fewer** players.
- **Basketball**: The team has **5 or fewer** players.

If a team meets the **minimum number of eligible players**, the AB player **may not start the game**. The AB player may only be used as a **substitute** after the **first quarter (basketball)** or **first period (handball)**.

Uniform Requirements

- AB players **must compete in a wheelchair**.
- AB players **must wear a contrasting vest or uniform color** to ensure they are easily identifiable.

Role and Restrictions

- The AB player serves as an **assist player only**.
- The AB player **may not score** or **dominate the game** in any way.
- The AB player should not have a **significant impact** on the outcome of the game.

Defensive Rules

When defending as an offensive player with ball control:

- The AB player may only defend within a **vertical plane** (i.e., straight up or side-to-side).
- The AB player **may not reach forward**, **take**, or **slap the ball** off the lap of the offensive player.
- If the offensive player **loses possession** (e.g., by passing, dropping the ball, or shooting), the AB player may then **attempt to gain possession**.

AB Player Violations and Penalties

1. **Unsportsmanlike Violation**
    - An AB player who **attempts to score** or **fails to defend within the vertical plane** will be assessed an **unsportsmanlike violation**.
    - The **first offense** results in a **warning**, which must be **documented on the official score sheet**.
    - Upon a **second violation** by the same AB player:
        - The **opposing team** is awarded a **penalty shot**.
        - The opposing team also receives **possession of the ball at half court**.

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2. **Illegal Scoring by AB Player**
    - If an AB player scores, the **basket or goal is annulled**.

3. **Penalty Shot Awarded to AB Player**
    - If an AB player is awarded a penalty shot, the **head coach must designate** a **teammate who was on the floor at the time of the infraction** to take the shot instead.

4. **Inadvertent Defensive Score by AB Player**
    - If an AB player **deflects** or **inadvertently scores** while on **defense in the goal area**, the **score counts for the opposing team**.
    - **No penalty is assessed** in this case.

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